

A Closer Walk With God

TEXT: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:18-20)

THESIS: To walk closer to God is to realize that we must surrender fully to him.

INTRODUCTION:

1. This statement was made by Jesus to his apostles shortly before he ascended to Heaven.
 - a. It is commonly called the ‘Great Commission,’ but notice the main thought of Jesus’ command.
 - b. “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”
 - i. Therefore, to make disciples is the goal of evangelizing the world for Christ.
2. But, are you a disciple of Jesus?
 - a. More than likely you believe in Jesus.
 - b. You might even be one to attend church services regularly.
 - i. But, is that what it means to be his disciple?
3. The purpose in this study is to make clear what is involved in being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.
4. Therefore,

DISCUSSION:

- I. LET US DEFINE THE WORD DISCIPLE.
 - A. The word ‘Disciple’ literally means, “A Learner.”
 1. According to Vine’s Expository dictionary of NT words, it denotes, “One who follows another’s teachings.”
 2. But, a disciple was not only a learner, he was also an adherent.
 - a. For this reason, disciples were spoken of as imitators of their teachers.
 - B. The goal in being a disciple is stated by Jesus, and that is to be like the teacher.
 1. He said, “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.” (Lk. 6:40)
 - a. Therefore, to be Christ’s disciple, is to strive to be like him!
 2. Now, according to the apostle Paul, this coincides with God’s goal in the redemption of mankind.
 3. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:29)
 - C. Now the question is: Do you have a strong desire to follow Jesus and become like him?

1. Unless you do, it cannot be said that you are truly his disciple!
2. There are also some identifying marks of discipleship given by Jesus which helps us to further identify a true disciple of Jesus.

II. THE MARKS OF A DISCIPLE

- A. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;” (Jn. 8:31)
1. So, this would imply that a disciple is a diligent student of the teachings of Christ.
 2. It would also require one to be a “Doer” of the word as mentioned in Jam. 1:22-25, instead of deceiving oneself like the foolish man who did not enter into the kingdom of God because he built his foundations upon himself and not upon Jesus Christ. (Matt. 7:21-28)
 3. Therefore because of these evidences, a true disciple would not:
 - a. Fail to study the Bible diligently (meaning to steadily preserve in details or exactness that which he reads).
 - b. Nor would he, willingly refrain from opportunities to study with others (Bible classes, Church services, Gospel meetings, etc . . .)
- B. Likewise, a disciple is also one who loves the brethren.
1. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (Jn. 13:34, 35)
 - a. Notice that this is a love patterned after the love of Jesus.
 - b. It is a love that is visible to the world.
 2. Therefore, a true disciple would:
 - a. Make every effort to get to know his brethren.
 - b. They would take advantage of occasions to encourage and grow closer to them.
 3. But, often times we may forget to remind ourselves that a disciple is one who wants to become like his teacher.
 - a. Was Jesus willing to sacrifice time and effort for his brethren?
 - b. Of course so . . . and so will we, IF we are truly his disciples!
- C. So, not only is a disciple “One who abides in Jesus’ words” and not only is he “one who loves the brethren,” another great mark of a disciple is one who bears much fruit.
1. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (Jn. 15:8)
 - a. Now, notice also what Jesus said in vs. 5 of the same chapter, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”
 - b. In both verses we have the word much.
 - (1) Jesus is not talking about an occasional good deed here.

- (2) Instead, he is referring to a lifestyle which prompts people to glorify God.
 - (a) Remember that Jesus testified to this fact when he told disciples to, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16)
 - (b) This is so important to remember because those who fail to bear much fruit will result in being severed from Christ.
 - i) “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” (Jn. 15:1, 2)
- 2. Now, tell me how anyone can be a disciple if he or she has been cut off or severed from Christ?
- 3. This point should be clear for to be a disciple of Jesus Christ means more than just a casual church member.
 - a. It requires commitment especially in regards to the teachings of Christ, the love of brethren and bearing fruit to the glory of God.
 - b. And this kind of commitment is seen further when we consider the “high cost” of discipleship demanded by Jesus which is recorded in LK. 14:25-33.

III. THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE

- A. Jesus must come first!
 - 1. For, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” (Lk. 14:26)
 - 2. Jesus must come before anything or anyone else including our own family.
 - a. For Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matt. 10:34-37)
 - 3. Jesus must come even before our own selves.
 - a. Luke records Jesus saying, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast

away?” (Lk. 9:23-25)

- B. Now, these are all hard things to do, but we must be willing to suffer for Christ.
 - 1. “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” (Lk. 14:27)
 - 2. When trying to live godly lives in an ungodly world, we may find that following Christ sometimes involves ridicule and persecution.
 - a. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12)
 - 3. But, even if we are blessed to escape such things, we must still be willing to spend time and effort in promoting the cause of Christ in positive ways.
- C. Therefore, putting it simply: “whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be the Lord’s disciple. (Lk. 14:33)
 - 1. This means that Jesus must be KING and LORD of our lives and nothing can take precedent over him and his will for us.
- D. This kind of “high cost” of discipleship demanded by Jesus caused many people to turn away from following him.
 - 1. But, Jesus was not trying to attract large crowds.
 - a. He simply wanted disciples.
 - 2. So, is the cost worth it?
 - a. I believe so because consider some of the rewards of discipleship.

IV. THE REWARDS OF BEING A DISCIPLE

- A. There is the promise of future blessings.
 - 1. We shall be saved from the wrath of God.
 - a. “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (Rom. 5:9)
 - 2. Also, we can look forward with joyful anticipation of eternity with God, free from sorrow, pain and death.
 - a. For, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”
 - b. Because he is the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” and “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” (Rev. 21:1-8)
- B. Then, there are the present blessings.
 - 1. Jesus offers a peace to the troubled heart that the world simply cannot give.
 - a. He said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (Jn.14:27)
 - 2. His words inspire joy to lift our spirits out of any depression.
 - a. “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (Jn. 15:11)

3. He also offers to those who follow him the abiding love of God.
 - a. “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.” (Jn. 15:9)
 - b. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” (1 Jn. 4:18)
 4. And, he makes it possible for us to be members of the family of God which is fully able, if need be, to replace our physical family.
 - a. “Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.” (Mk. 10:28-30)
- C. Likewise, there are so many other blessings we could mention that are enjoyed by disciples of Christ.
1. But, these suffice to demonstrate that though discipleship is costly, the rewards far exceed the cost!
 2. So, now that we understand the nature of discipleship, its cost and rewards, I would hope that we all want to be true disciples of Jesus Christ.
 3. But, how does one begin on this journey?
 - a. The answer is discovered when we look back at the opening text of Matt. 28:19, 20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

V. THE BEGINNING OF A DISCIPLE

- A. According to Jesus, it involves baptism. (Matt. 28:19)
 1. But, why baptism?
 - a. Do you remember the goal of discipleship? To be like Jesus?
 - b. Jesus was holy and sinless, yet we are to be like him.
 - c. And thankfully, baptism is described as an act of faith which puts us in contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ so we can be forgiven. (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3, 4)
 - d. But, not only does it cleanse, baptism is the means by which one puts on Christ. (Gal. 3:27)
 - e. Therefore, baptism is the logical starting place for true discipleship.
 2. Now, what is baptism?

- a. It is an act of submission which must be preceded by faith in Jesus and repentance for our sins. (Acts 8:36, 37)
 - (1) This forbids infant baptism because they are incapable of believing and repenting.
 - b. But, baptism is also an act of submission which involves a burial in water in which one then rises to walk in newness of life through the power of God. (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12)
 - (1) This forbids sprinkling and pouring as a mode of baptism because neither of these involves a burial nor an immersion which is the meaning of the word ‘baptidzo’ - baptize
 - c. Now, when baptism is done according to the Word of God as an act of faith on our part, it results in a wonderful working of God in our lives.
 - (1) Our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus. (Acts. 22:16; Eph. 5:25-27)
 - (2) We are regenerated and renewed by the Spirit of God so we can now live for God. (Tit. 3:5, 6)
 - (3) It is truly a rebirth involving both water and the Spirit. (Jn. 3:5)
- B. But, baptism is only the beginning for teaching and obedience must follow.
- 1. Matt. 28:20
 - 2. This brings us back to the very definition of discipleship.
 - a. For Jesus clearly stated that we are to be taught (meaning learners) and we are to observe (meaning to be adherents or doers).
 - b. In this way we embark on a life devoted to learning and doing all that Jesus has commanded us to do.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Only those scripturally baptized and demonstrating the marks of discipleship, despite the costs, can truly be called disciples of Jesus!
- 2. And only they can realistically look forward to the rewards of discipleship and take consolation in the promise of Jesus which is the statement, “and lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:20)
 - a. If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, then the prospects of “A closer walk with God” and more fruitful service as a disciple should be of great interest to you.
- 3. Remember that all power in Heaven and earth is given to Christ (Matt. 28:18-20) and that his disciples are not above the master (Lk. 6:40).
 - a. His disciples or Christians are to be learners, imitators, doers of the word, lovers of the brethren, bearing fruit and putting Christ before all things including yourselves.
- 4. Do you have a strong desire to be like the Master?
 - a. Do you desire to be saved from the wrath of God?
 - b. Do you desire to receive the peace from Christ that the world cannot give?

- c. If your answer is yes, then why at times do you publically sin and still think that God will overlook your actions of being nothing more than a pseudo (false) disciple?
- d. If you have lost your discipleship, then now is the time to redeem yourself and restore yourself to God before it is everlasting too late.